

USFK commander addresses military issues

Editor's Note: This is one in a series of monthly articles that addresses issues and concerns of military forces serving within U.S. Forces Korea. USFK commander, Gen. Thomas Schwartz, routinely visits the soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines stationed on the Korean peninsula and conducts sensing sessions to receive feedback on issues ranging from military service to quality of life. Schwartz seeks to make serving in Korea an assignment of choice and uses these sensing sessions as a means of focusing the USFK and service component commanders and staffs. The following topics were raised during recent visits. Not all issues can be corrected immediately and will require carrying them as ongoing CINC projects, with progress published monthly in this column. Other issues are awaiting responses and will be reported in future releases.

Issue: Members of the Korean Augmentation to the U.S. Army get a "KATUSA Week." When are soldiers going to get a "Soldier's Week?"

Response: Don't let the name fool you. KATUSA Week is a one-week recreational period designed to allow U.S. and KATUSA soldiers to participate in activities that highlight the contributions of the KATUSA soldiers to our mission, highlights Republic of Korea culture and increases fellowship and camaraderie among U.S. and KATUSA soldiers. EUSA Regulation 600-2, chapter, 1, paragraph 1-12, states: Commanders will support the KATUSA Soldier Week held annually, normally during the second week of May. This event should take precedence over all other training. Commanders should maximize participation by KATUSA and U.S. soldiers. Funding for KATUSA Soldier Week will be budgeted by the installation or Major Support Command budget officer. Recommended events are talent contests, sports events and exhibitions. The commander will obtain the advice of ROK army staff officers and NCOs when determining events.

Issue: Can we bring back Skill Qualification Tests?

Response: This is an Army-level issue being worked by the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) at Fort Monroe, Va. The SKT program was discontinued by the Army since TRADOC couldn't fully maintain the program during the draw down. While the Army wrestles with the pros and cons of bringing back SQTs, the chain of command needs to ensure all soldiers maximize technical Military Occupational Specialty training opportunities.

Issue: How do you prevent rewarding the workaholic vs. rewarding those that can balance their jobs?

Response: You start by leading by example. This has to start at the top; it has to start with the policy and with the sergeants major. When it's time to go home, go home! Just because you don't have family here doesn't mean that you don't need some balance in your life. I expect all to follow the "Soldier's Time" guidance. Go home at 4 p.m. on Thursdays

Issue: What can be done to get job satisfaction during a one-year tour? Officers on staff are very busy with numerous exercises (one after the other), real-world requirements, and all the 25-meter pop-up targets that come every day. It's very hard to get a quality product with all the requirements that need to be met.

Response: I couldn't be more empathetic. I can't go into details, but in the next several months there will be a major change in exercise scheduling, which I think will have a significant and positive impact on the way we do business here. There is a better way to deal with this, and we will. Look forward to great improvements in our exercise schedule.

Issue: With the increase of quality of life in Korea, will the tour of duty be increased?

Response: No. You will still be required to do one year unaccompanied and two years accompanied. We're going to stick with that, and you'll still have the option to extend.

Issue: My soldiers would like to know why we work 10-hour duty days in Korea?

Response: You have to remember, Korea is a different theater and we have to stay trained and ready. Our mission is much greater and much more realistic here. Your peacetime mission today could very well turn into a wartime mission tomorrow. Take your jobs seriously. Talk to your soldiers about why they are here, inform them of their mission and how this theater is different, but continue to be sensitive toward their needs. Although Korea is different, soldiers still need balance.

Issue: Since this is a country with an armistice and not a peace treaty, why isn't there any Hazardous Duty Pay?

Response: I looked at the definition of Hazardous Duty Pay and Hardship Pay. Hazardous Duty Pay is clearly defined, and Korea does not fall into that category. But Hardship Pay does. Serving in Korea imposes significant hardships on everyone. I knew we could win that one, and we did.

Issue: Personnel Tempo is tracking temporary duties, deployments and field problems. Was anything mentioned about remote sites?

Response: I personally asked for clarification on

Korea. The agreement specifically stated no PCS time will be counted. The clock has started and this policy applies to every servicemember all over the world, from general to private. Every day you spend away from your bunk is a day that counts. Servicemembers are authorized \$100 per day per diem if they are deployed (TDY, operational exercises, and unit training - on or off-post) beyond 400 days in a 730-day rolling window. Make sure your time is being tracked.

Issue: I am about to PCS from here within 30 days and I don't have PCS orders.

Response: No soldier should be 30 days out from PCSing without orders. In most cases, there is a reason for the soldier not having orders. The soldier may need to extend or re-enlist, they may not have enough time to return to the United States, or they may not have received orders from the Department of the Army for the next duty station. In any case, if you are five months out from PCSing and have not received any notification of your next assignment, contact your Personnel Administration Center. They will be able to help you.

Issue: Why is there a difference in the hardship pay throughout the peninsula?

Response: My first battle was to convince Congress that Korea qualified to receive hardship pay. We won that battle. My position going into the fight was that if I won, I would not get \$150 for the entire peninsula. So, with that guidance that I was given, the monies were distributed based on the level of quality-of-life hardship in the area. My intention is to keep fighting this battle until I have \$150 for everyone.

Commander's Hotline

The commander's hotline is your direct line of communication between me and the Wolf Pack. It's one of several means of helping to resolve concerns and to get my response to comments and questions. As a general rule, I ask you to contact the agency involved first, but if you are not satisfied, call the hotline at 782-5284, e-mail the 8th Fighter Wing Public Affairs office or e-mail me directly.



Col. Philip Breedlove,
8th Fighter Wing commander

Who to call	
Base exchange.....	782-4520
Chapel.....	782-4300
Civil engineer squadron customer service.....	782-5318
Commissary manager.....	782-4144
Computer help desk.....	782-2666
Fitness center.....	782-4026
Housing office.....	782-4088
Inspector General.....	782-4850
IDEA office.....	782-4020
Law enforcement desk.....	782-4944
Legal assistance.....	782-4283
Military equal opportunity.....	782-4055
Military pay.....	782-5574
Military personnel flight customer service.....	782-5276
Medical patient advocate.....	782-4014



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Faxes and typewritten submissions are also accepted.

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